

Frequently Asked Questions Monkeypox

ALABAMA
PUBLIC
HEALTH

- 1. What is monkeypox?** Monkeypox is a very rare disease caused by infection with monkeypox virus. It is usually found in Central and West Africa and does not occur naturally in the United States. However, at least nine cases have recently been identified in the U.S. with more cases expected. This situation is being closely monitored by public health. More cases are expected in the U.S. There are no cases of monkeypox in Alabama at this time.
- 2. How does monkeypox spread?** Monkeypox does not spread easily from person to person. It can spread through contact with infected animals or infected humans, or through contact with materials used by infected people (like clothing or linens). The virus typically enters the body through broken skin, respiratory droplets, or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth). Some people who have had monkeypox have been men who have sex with men.
- 3. Is monkeypox a sexually transmitted disease?** Monkeypox has not previously been described as a sexually transmitted infection, though it can be passed on by direct contact during sex, i.e., via lesions on the skin. It is currently unknown if it spreads through semen or vaginal fluids. Because rashes can also emerge on the genitals and inside the mouth, oral sex could also be a route of transmission for the virus. It is important to understand the risk of infection is not limited to people who are sexually active or men who have sex with men. Anyone who has close physical contact with someone who is infectious is at risk.
- 4. What are the signs of monkeypox?** Disease symptoms always involve a rash which begins after the start of other symptoms. For the current outbreak, cases have presented atypically, which means that most of the cases have had a rash to start in the genital or perianal region. Early signs include fever, malaise (a general feeling of discomfort), headache, swollen lymph nodes, and sometimes cough or sore throat. Other symptoms include muscle aches, backache, chills, and exhaustion. This clinical picture may change as more cases of monkeypox are diagnosed.
- 5. How is monkeypox treated?** In most cases of monkeypox, treatment is supportive, easing the symptoms of illness. Some cases, such as in persons with severe disease or high risk of severe disease, may need special antiviral treatment, which has to be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). An antiviral developed to treat smallpox (tecovirimat, commercialized as TPOXX) has been approved for the treatment of monkeypox and may be obtained. The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is in regular communication with the CDC about any treatment for monkeypox if needed.
- 6. How can you prevent monkeypox?** Steps to help prevent monkeypox include:
 - Avoiding contact with animals that could have the virus (such as animals that are sick or that have been found dead)
 - Avoiding contact with materials, like bedding, that has been in contact with a sick animal or person infected with this virus
 - Keeping infected patients away from others
 - Washing hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after contact with infected animals or humans.
- 7. What is happening now with monkeypox?** Currently, there is an international outbreak occurring that may not be associated with animals or travel to an area where this disease is more common. ADPH is monitoring this situation and alerting healthcare providers through our Health Alert Network.
- 8. Is there a vaccine for monkeypox?** There is a vaccine that can prevent monkeypox and can be used, under certain circumstances, for the protection of people who are at high risk of exposure to this disease. Use of vaccine for monkeypox would be determined by the health department, in consultation with the CDC. ADPH is in regular communication with the CDC about any potential use of the monkeypox vaccine. Vaccination after exposure, up to four days, could be done, and the need for a vaccine would be determined based on the situation. Vaccine given between 4 and 14 days after the date of exposure may reduce symptoms, but not prevent disease. Other vaccines for smallpox may provide limited protection since both diseases are from the same family of viruses. People vaccinated against smallpox, in the past, will have some protection against monkeypox. People below the 40-50 age group are unlikely to have been inoculated against smallpox since vaccination ended in the world by 1980. Some people received the smallpox vaccine after 9/11 if they were first responders or medical personnel.
- 9. Will ADPH provide PPE?** ADPH will provide PPE if entities do not have ready access.
- 10. What should I do if I think I may have monkeypox?** Please contact your healthcare provider if you believe you have signs or symptoms of monkeypox.

For more information: cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022;

alabamapublichealth.gov/bcd/assets/adph_han_monkeypox_052622_updated.pdf